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Bolstering Our Security

Few Americans will envy the well-qualified General Maxwell D. Taylor his Presidential assignment of investigating the operations of the Central Intelligence Agency. For the basic problem attaching to his mission is not so much whether the CIA's "intelligence" on Cuba was faulty—and it was that and more—but whether the CIA should be engaged in the business of helping to mount military operations at all.

Two fundamental questions must be answered by General Taylor before the President can determine upon a future course as regards the internal structure of his Administration. The first of these has to do with the CIA mission. Has it attempted to fill a vacuum in operations left by the State Department? Has it, as a consequence, gone too far beyond the assignment of gathering information, assessing it and proceeded into the field of planning as well as pursuing major policy operations?

Next, who exercises control over the CIA when the President and the Security Council have approved a delicate operation involving the cloak-and-dagger agency's participation? Should it be the President himself? The Cabinet? The NSC? Or should it be the Department of State, the President's fountainhead of policy?

Naturally, General Taylor's investigation will have to be completed before Washington can learn if there is, in fact, any extensive lack of liaison between the State Department and the CIA. But the circumstantial evidence of

the Cuban case tends to indicate that this was a classic example of the nation's left hand not knowing what its right hand was doing. Was the CIA at fault? The State Department? Was it both? Or was it the President solely? Boldly, Mr. Kennedy has taken upon himself the full responsibility for the fiasco, and in the final analysis this is the Constitutional responsibility of the President of the United States. But that action, manifold as it was, still does not resolve the thorny questions of who did what wrong—and why.

The point is, of course, that remedial action must be taken, and soon, if for no reason other than the fact that the United States is so obviously entering a period of a much tougher phase in the cold war. There will be more trouble in Cuba. The issue of Laos will not be easily resolved. And Soviet Premier Khrushchev has determined, as he told pundit Walter Lippman, to press the Berlin dispute to a showdown stage at an early date. These bleak, even grim, prospects dictate the decision that the President must press his operating procedures into a proper working order, and soon.

To that end, he now has General Taylor at work, and has offered him the services of his most trusted confidant, Attorney General Robert Kennedy, to speed the process. Let us hope that their inquiry is broad, comprehensive and swift, and that it will lead to a constructive reorganization within the Executive Department to bolster the national security.